INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS

REGIONAL DELEGATION FOR
UNITED STATES AND CANADA

ICRC

10 March 2006
WAS 06/64

Dear Sir,

Having only recently learned that Red Cross Messages are included in the documents to be released by the Department of Defense, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) wishes to state its objection to the public release of Red Cross Messages sent or received by internees who are or have been interned in Guatanamo Bay, Cuba.

The purpose of a Red Cross Message is to re-establish and maintain family links between persons deprived of liberty and their family. It contains only private or family news and is always submitted by the ICRC to the detaining authorities prior to delivery as part of the transmission process. Official documents and photos of a family nature may be attached to a Red Cross Message upon agreement with the concerned authorities. Documents attached to a Red Cross Message should be treated in the same manner as the message itself.

The public release of information contained in Red Cross Messages could impact on the internees concerned, their family and/or a third person. In particular, the ICRC is concerned that such public release could adversely impact the safety or security of persons whose names and/or personal information is contained in the messages. Additionally, the concerned persons should not be exposed to public curiosity, as provided under international humanitarian law. The ICRC believes that persons whose names and/or personal information would be revealed by such a release may have a legitimate privacy interest in opposing the release. The ICRC does not publicly disclose these messages.

Consequently, unless the concerned internees have freely expressed their consent to the public release of Red Cross Messages sent or received by them, the ICRC opposes any such release and asks the Department of Defense to not publicly release these messages.

Sincerely,

Loane

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Head of Regional Delegation

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